



# BODY LANGUAGE OF CATS

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# Main misunderstandings



- Result from a lack of understanding of feline social systems
- Involve misinterpretation of feline communication

# Basic principles of Feline Social Behaviors

- Cats are solitary survivors
- They have a fundamental need to be in control
- Free and immediate access to resources is needed at all times
- Cats have very limited behaviours to facilitate co-operation



# Basic principles of Feline Social Behaviors



- Avoidance is their preferred defence strategy
- They need the ability to evade or avoid sources of potential stress
- Access to privacy and seclusion are considered to be positive features of the environment



# Basic principles of Feline Social Behaviors

- Lack of need for social interaction
- Solitary hunter
- Solitary survivor



# Basic principles of Feline Social Behaviors

- Social relationships are largely limited to relatives



# Basic principles of Feline Social Behaviors



- Research by Turner identified different levels of sociability in cats
- Low sociability cats live on the periphery of social groupings
- One common misunderstanding from cat owners relates to the cat's lack of requirement for social interaction

# Solitary survivors

- The lack of reliance on social contact is reflected in the cat's ability to survive alone
- Whether out of necessity or choice, all cats are capable of existing in a social vacuum





# Solitary survivors



- This does not mean that all cats will choose to avoid feline, or human, company
- But they can take it or leave it and will adapt more readily to a solitary existence



# Feline interaction

- Even when social interaction does take place in the feline world it is characterised by low intensity and high frequency interactions
- This can lead to major problems of interpretation for owners since the contact we have with one another is high intensity but low frequency



# Maintaining feline society

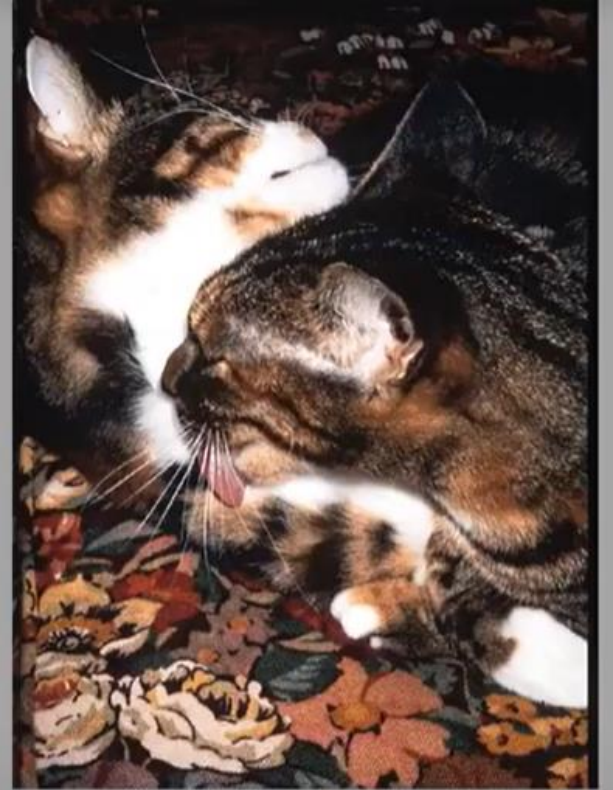
- When cats are forced to share territory, be that in the home or in the neighbourhood they have some fundamental requirements which include:
- Free and immediate access to important resources when required
- Provision of privacy
- The ability to escape from or avoid potential stress





# Feline society

- Communication is vital in maintaining social groupings
- Allorubbing and allogrooming are of social significance





# Allorubbing

Raised tail will often precede mutual rubbing



# Allogrooming

- Mutual grooming is a reciprocal behaviour
- It is seen post conflict as a reconciling behaviour





# Maintaining feline society

- Cats live in social groups made up of related individuals
- Contact with total strangers is kept to a minimum
- Communication aims to keep distance between individuals
- Behaviours which are designed to keep strangers at bay include olfactory, vocal and visual communication



# Feline defence strategies

- Avoid (Flight) – preferred option
- Evade (passively) Inhibit (Freeze) – vulnerable
- Repel (Fight) – last resort
- Evade (actively) Appease (Fiddle) – very limited





Any question??

